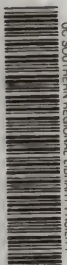


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# AFTER ADAM'S FALL

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**AFTER ADAM'S FALL**







“THEN WAS GRIEF LIFTED FROM THEIR HEARTS AWHILE”



# AFTER ADAM'S FALL

BY

THE AUTHOR OF "DAVID THE BROIDERER"

AND OTHER POEMS



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To  
LADY LINDSAY  
THIS POEM  
IN REMEMBRANCE OF MANY KINDNESSES  
IS GRATEFULLY DEDICATED  
BY  
THE AUTHOR

987533



## AFTER ADAM'S FALL

STILL in their ears rang forth the curse of God.

To Adam and to Eve, a dreadful voice.

E'en in their sleep they heard the words and  
wept.

And as they left the garden of their joy,

They watched towards the East the flaming  
sword,

Held by the Cherubim, and as it flamed,

To every side its sharp edge turned and flared.

All rays it seemed, a living sentinel,

Forbidding entrance to the stricken pair.

Then human frailty gave a tongue to grief,

And darkened Adam's soul with vain remorse.

"Oh wherefore, Woman, didst thou bid me  
eat?

"Why didst thou give me fruit from that cursed  
tree?

"Saying 'tis surely pleasant to the eyes,

"And much to be desired is the fruit

"To make one wise, and prescient above thought.

"If thou had'st not persuaded me to this,

"We both might still have lived in Paradise."

Then Eve, amidst her tears, low, answered  
him,

"Adam, thou knowest well the serpent came,

"And tempted me with specious argument,

"And lying words, full of base subtlety.

“Not mine the fault, on him be all the blame.”

To whom her husband, — “Nay,—it profits  
nought,

“To blame the author of our evil fate,

“Seeing what’s done can never be retrieved.

“These robes of leaves proclaim first innocence

“Has fled from us, as darkness from the dawn ;

“Since we knew not until the Serpent came,

“And bade us eat the good and evil fruit,

“That we were naked in the sight of God.

“Oh, whither shall we fly? and where abide?

“For if we wander through the World’s wide  
bounds,

“Still in the night-time we shall see the flame,

“Reflected in the skies, of that red sword,

“And mighty wings of Cherubim outspread,  
“Glistening with radiance, unsurpassable.  
“Nor ever shall we, with our inward ears,  
“Fail both of us to hear the voice of God,  
“That called us in the garden, midst the trees,  
“And spake the curse that fills us both with  
fear,  
“As if the solemn echo sounded still.  
“O Eve! the Woman given me by God,  
“Bone of my bone, and fair flesh of my flesh,  
“Made from myself by Him who made me first,  
“Made, whilst He sealed mine eyes in deepest  
sleep,  
“Is there no comfort left in our sad lives?  
“Thou art a portion of my wretched self,



“And surely I may speak unto myself,  
 “And yet find solace in another’s speech,  
 “Though still I speak unto myself, through  
 thee.”

To whom spake Eve, “Oh, Adam, I indeed  
 “Am part of thy dear self:—therefore it is  
 “That with an unavailing helpless grief,  
 “I mourn the more the deed that I have done,  
 “In bringing on us both, unending loss.  
 “Would I had died before I did this thing!  
 “And put within your hand the noxious fruit  
 ‘That poisoned all our daily lives for aye!  
 “But there was somewhat that the Lord God  
 said  
 ‘Unto the Serpent that is hid from me.

“For enmity ’twixt me and him, He said  
“Was to exist,—and ’twixt his seed and mine.  
“Our race should bruise his head :—then God  
declared,  
“(The prophecy was on the Serpent laid,)  
“The Serpent our seed’s heel.—What doth it  
mean?”

And Adam said to Eve, “I cannot tell.”  
And then he took her hand, and cast again  
One lingering last sad glance upon the place,  
Where stood the Cherubim with flaming sword.  
“Oh, let us leave,” he cried, “this dreadful  
spot,  
“And hasten to depart :—nor pause in flight,  
“Till wearied nature overcome at last

"May give us the sweet anodyne of sleep.

"Yet well I know, where ever we may fly,

"Never shall we escape the awesome thought

"That our Creator's anger falls on us.

"And Oh, how different, how strange our lives !

"No longer shall we eat the fruits of earth,

"Without the sweat of labour on our brows,

"For my sake,—Lo!—the very ground is cursed!

"And from it's teeming bosom it brings forth

"Thistles of monstrous height, and crops of  
thorns.

"Oh Eve! didst note the last words of the  
curse?

"In thy brow's sweat thou shalt now eat thy  
bread,

“Till thou return unto the dust again :

“For dust thou art,—to dust shalt thou return.

“What mean those awful words?—I do not  
know.

“Can we be dust?—being two living souls?”

To whom said Eve,—“We have seen nought  
but life,

“For all things live,—trees, fish, and birds, and  
beasts.

“Euphrates, Pison, Gihon, Hiddekel,

“Those streams that watered well fair Eden’s  
range,

“Seemed all alive, so swift they hastened on.

“Can there be ought but life?—what is it then?

“Dost thou remember, Adam, in the days

- “Of our first innocence?—so near?—so far,  
“How when we wandered where the stream  
divides,  
“Just at the ordered bounds of Paradise,  
“Where willows wept above the sparkling depth,  
“And on the banks in rich profusion grew,  
“The blooms of asphodel, and amaranth,  
“Where all the flowers gave forth their strong  
sweet scent  
“In adoration of their Maker’s will,  
“(‘Dost thou remember, Adam?’ as I asked)  
“The parting of the waters into four,  
“(Those same four rivers I’ve already named)  
“Made manifest the figure of a cross?  
“But tell me, Adam, is there ought but life?”

"I know not, Eve,—but we shall know in time.

"May it not be in wrath that we shall learn!

"But oh! I have a keen presentiment,

"A few years hence, too well it shall be known,

"How unto dust a human life shall turn."

"Oh Adam, 'tis a thought too hard for me,

"May He who made us, teach us tenderly!"

Then with their arms about each other's necks,

They fixed their eyes upon the downward

way,

Nor turned again to mark the flaming sword,

Lest sudden blindness should make night for

them.

Through many days they fled at utmost speed,

And as the Sun arose upon their way,

“Would God it were the evening!” was their  
cry.

And when the evening star appeared above,  
“Would God it were the morning!” was their  
moan.

At last they reached a plain where Hiddekel  
(After long windings like the Serpent’s folds)  
Washes most kindly soil, for pasture fit.  
Flowing in rapid flood, it hurries on,  
As if reluctant to be stopped or stayed,  
Till all its fertilizing course be run.  
And there they rested, offering thanks to God,  
And there they built a wattle house of boughs,  
The first of human habitations raised.  
There after mournful years a Son was born.

Eve called her first born Cain, and thanked her  
God,  
And said "Lo! see!—a man-child from the  
Lord!"

And she forgot her anguish, for the joy  
That a man-child was born into the World.  
Then was grief lifted from their hearts awhile.  
And as the child grew up, he tilled the land,  
A husbandman of giant strength he proved.  
Cain honoured not his parents, as he grew,  
Nor gave observance to his Mother's wish,  
Nor ever led her gently by the hand,  
And did reluctantly what Adam bade.  
Sullen his mood which on a sudden raged.  
He lonely brooded o'er imagined wrongs ;



And grim and frowning was his countenance,  
 That sometimes wore a look of hopeless woe.  
 Deep set within his head, his sunken eyes,  
 His beetling brows above, together grew.  
 His strong bull neck held firm his bullet head,  
 His beard unkempt, descended to his knees,  
 Scarlet the hair, — abundant, — rough, — and  
     coarse.

Brawny his legs and arms,—deep-chested he ;  
 And often his dark orbs with fury flared.  
 The measure 'twixt his shoulders was immense.  
 Ill man to meet when anger tore his Soul.  
 Thus soon was darkened all the parents' joy.

But after two years from the birth of Cain,

Eve bore another Son,—Abel his name.

And he was gentle from his very birth,

And when his Mother felt the heat at noon,

He raised a bower of branches, where she sat,

And fanned her with a palm leaf, gathered fresh,

And brought clear water from the running  
stream,

And laved her hands, and cooled her fevered  
brows.

Nor less obedient to his Father's will

Was Abel in whose heart grew filial love.

For Adam bade him tend the flocks of sheep.

Good shepherd, he ;—and all the ewes and  
lambs,

Bleated their gratitude, and followed him.

In stature Abel was not tall as Cain,  
His limbs more supple, and of finer mould.  
And oft-times in the depths of his blue eyes  
Shone tenderness and sympathy and joy.  
When the Sun glinted through his amber locks,  
They seemed an aureole to crown his brows  
Which arched,—as if upraised in silent awe  
Of his Creator's power and Majesty.  
His features clear-cut as in ivory,  
Were tinged with the first bloom of the blush  
    rose,  
Stealing upon his cheek through wholesome  
    white.  
His sweet voice sounded like a silver bell,  
In which seemed blended melody of birds.

The whispered cooing of the cushat dove,  
The fervent ecstasy of Heaven's lark,  
The liquid trilling of the nightingale,  
Yet tempered all with seemly manliness.  
No virile beard hung round about his lips  
To hide the perfect oval of his face.  
And when he stood, leaning upon his crook,  
There was the grace of bending lily's growth  
Albeit mixed with sovereign dignity.  
He was the apple of his Father's eye,  
And all his Mother's heart went out to him.  
In him God's image plainly was set forth.  
Now Adam ever made his prayer to God,  
At morning, and at noon, again at eve.  
He taught his Sons to praise the Lord of all,

And bade them bring firstlings and fruits to  
Him.

Then to the Lord, Cain brought first fruits of  
earth.

And Abel brought the firstlings of his flock.

And bent his knees beside the Altar-stone,

Clasping his hands together,—thus he prayed.

“O Lord my God, Thou knowest all my  
thoughts,

“Nor is their need for me to ask Thee ought :

“Yet would I offer not my Sacrifice,

“Except with prayers and praises on my lips.

\* “Oh ! bless my Father in his goings out,

“And in his comings in, for ever more,

“Teach him to know and walk in all Thy ways,

“And bless and keep our Mother Eve therein !

“Make seed-time fair, and harvest plentiful.

“Increase the flocks and herds abundantly,

“Watch o’er the pregnant ewes and new weaned  
lambs,

“And save the milch cows from the ravening  
wolves.

“Lord, turn my Brother Cain’s hard heart to  
me,

“And knit us close in holy brotherhood !

“That so we both may better do Thy will,

“That so in honouring our Parents, we

“May through them also pay the honour due

“To Thy great name, Creator of us all !

“Help me,—and save me,—pardon all my sin.

"I am a worm and no man in Thy sight,  
 "Lo! I am less than nought,—Thy servant still!  
 "I know not, Lord, the road that I shall tread,  
 "I know not whither Thou shalt lead my steps :  
 "Guard me and keep me wheresoe'er I go,  
 "Thou art my staff and shield and sure defence.  
 "What *shall* be, is hid from me,—my Lord  
     God!

"Whate'er betide,—accept my erring soul,  
 "Uplift me in Thine everlasting arms.  
 "I praise and thank Thee for my happy life,  
 "For all I am,—and all that I shall be.  
 "Yet only can I pray acceptably,  
 "When Thou dost teach my tongue to pray  
     aright."  
     D

Now God was wroth with Cain, because he  
sinned,

And he accepted not Cain's offering.

But to the second Son's he had respect.

Then Cain was wroth, and all his visage  
changed,

Then spake the Lord with Cain,—“Why art  
thou wroth?

“And why is now thy visage greatly changed?

“If thou dost well,—thou wilt accepted be.

“If thou dost ill,—sin lieth at thy door,

“Thy younger brother over thee shall rule.”

Then Cain with Abel waged a wordy war,

And blows succeeded words,—and in the field

Cain beat out Abel's life,—wielding his club,



Beside the sheepfold,—near a purling brook.

Thus Cain his brother slew upon that day.

Then spake God's voice to Cain the murderer,

“Where is thy brother Abel?”—and Cain  
said,

“I know not, Lord;—am I my brother's  
guard?”

Then spake the Lord again,—“What hast thou  
done?”

“Thy brother's blood,—it crieth from the  
ground,

“Now art thou cursed from earth which oped  
her mouth

“To take thy brother's blood,—slain by thy  
hand.

“Thy labour on the ground is all in vain.

“Henceforth it shall not yield thee crops, nor  
fruits,

“And thou shalt be a fugitive on earth.”

Then came a bitter cry from Cain's rent heart.

“My punishment is more than I can bear,

“Behold I am a vagabond on earth,

“And whoso findeth me,—shall slay me, Lord.”

Then spake the Lord,—“Whoever slayeth  
Cain,

“My vengeance seven times shall fall on him.”

And God marked Cain,—that none should slay  
the man.

Then from the presence of his God went Cain.

Wearied with wandering he pitched his tent

Towards the East of Eden, and there dwelt.  
Ever he saw his brother Abel's form  
Lying beside the sheepfold, near the brook.  
His hair of ruddy gold clotted with blood,  
Wide-staring eyes that winked not at the sun,  
And solemn stillness of the first dead man.  
Next day came Eve and Adam to the sheep,  
And there beside the fold was Abel found.  
Then Eve cried out with lamentable voice,  
“O Adam!—husband!—Father of our Son! .  
“Wherefore doth Abel lie so very still?  
“I cannot hear his gentle breathing ;—List!  
“List!—List! O List!—I cannot hear him  
    breathe!”  
And then she stroked his hair of ruddy gold,

And touched his face with fondling Mother's  
hand.

And then She shrieked aloud,—“Why is he  
pale?

“And what is this upon his tender cheek?

“I never saw,—I never yet have seen

“A thing so strange :—this colour it is red,

“But not the colour of my fair boy's face.

“And oh !—his face is marble cold to touch !

“What ! — doth he sleep ? — but what a  
wondrous sleep !

“In all his life he never slept like this !”

Then Adam knelt beside his murdered Son,

And groaning, moaned,—“Did I not say to  
you

“Long since?—I had a keen presentiment

“I’d learn what meant the words,—‘dust unto  
dust.’

“Oh Eve!—Abel lies dead,—and much I fear

“That Cain has struck the life from our sweet  
boy.

“For Cain, he wrangled after Sacrifice.”

Then our first Mother wept,—and tore her  
hair.

“Is this chill death?” she cried,—“Oh hateful  
death!

“Oh dread destroyer of the Sons of men!

“Oh cruel!—pitiless!—Oh curse of God!

“Oh fell performer of His sure decree!

“Thy sting is sharp,—thy victory supreme!”

Then in each other's arms they spent their  
grief,

And each gave 'comfort,—though each sorely  
wept.

And both knew nought but sorrow in their  
hearts.

Lo! six relentless years had passed and gone,

When unto Eve another Son was born.

Eve named her third Son Seth—"For God,"  
said she,

"Hath given me this child in Abel's stead,

"Whom Cain, my first-born Son, remorseless,  
slew."

And Eve bore other Sons and Daughters fair.

Then also unto Seth was born a Son.

Seth named him Enos,—as to him seemed  
good.

Then men began to call upon the Lord.

Then passed a century, and fled away,

As swiftly as the Sun sets in the West.

. . . . .

Bowed with old age that came before its time,

Across the desert rode the outcast Cain,

And on his forehead, there God's mark was  
set ;

Driven by fear,—though no man him pur-  
sued,—

Fleeing,—to find no rest in the wide World,

He from his camel marked the trackless waste,

The long unending line of sun-warmed sand.  
Before his aching eyes stretched plains of sand.  
Sand stretched before him,—far as eye could  
reach.

\* And on the desert lone,—two shadows fell,  
Cain's and his camel's,—nothing more,—nought  
else.

He saw the loathsome vultures gorged with  
food,

Foul Desert scavengers in heavy flight ;  
And ever as they wheeled,—they nearer came  
Where Cain bestrode his camel, pacing slow :  
Themselves excepted, — all that breathed of  
life.

They,—perching on the carcase of a mule,



Scraping along the bones with their hooked  
beaks,

Picked soon in greedy haste the frame-work bare,  
And left a horrid polish on the ribs,  
Making a skeleton,—last wreck of life;  
Then flew away,—screaming a warning note.

Then Cain upraised his voice in agony.

“Why am I driven thus so far away?

“I cannot bear my burden,—let me die!

“The torture of my soul is terrible.

“My heart is weak as water through my fear.

“Here is my only friend,—Ayesha named,

“The camel of my choice,—my willing slave!”

And there was none that answered,—no,—not  
one.

Then frenzied,—dropping with fatigue,—he

saw

A green oasis in the desert wide,

And cried,—“Ayesha!—lo!—the trees and  
shade!”

The beast, more prescient than her master’s  
mind,

Bent her long neck,—and nosed the dusty  
way,

And with distended nostrils sniffed the air,

To smell for water in the desert wind.

(But it was nought but desert mirage there

That vanished swift as spectres in a dream.)

Again Ayesha downward bent her neck,

And trembling,—staggering,—o’er-ridden,—fell

Prone on the ground,—that promised her a  
grave.

Then Cain dismounted, — weeping feeble  
tears.

“Ayesha did I train thee but for this?

“And fed and nurtured thee with choicest food?

“And taught thy sullen temper to obey?

“Unblemished thou!—a camel of rare breed!

“And hast thou borne me far,—only to die?

“Or are we now together both to die?

“O Abel, what is death?—*thou* knowest now,

“O Abel, listen!—pity,—pity me!

“Where art thou? say!—oh tell me where thou  
art!

“I battered out thy life in sudden rage,

“Thy death came quick,—a moment and ’twas done.

“And am I all these years to bear that sin?

“Ah!—for one moment’s crime to suffer thus!

“A moment’s crime!—and punishment for aye!”

And there was none that answered him,—not one.

“Remorse, despair, twin torturers of crime,

“Have clutched me in their unrelaxing grasp.

“Oh, Abel, listen,—pity,—pity me!”

But there was none that answered,—no, not one.

Night came, all suddenly succeeding day:

And Cain o’er-wrought, slept a deep dreamless sleep.

Hard by, Ayesha on the sand reposed,  
(For Cain had eased her of her heavy load.)  
The moonlight made her bulk look weird and  
    strange  
Stretched out beneath the glamour of the  
    stars.  
In sleep came strength to Cain the murderer,  
And to his camel,—new vitality.  
The next day dawned, and soon Cain found a  
    well,  
And slaked his burning thirst,—and gathered  
    dates,  
And e'er Cain ate himself,—he fed his beast.  
Deep drank Ayesha from the well's full brim,  
And with the instinct given her by God,

Thrice drank full draughts that so she might  
provide

Against the threatened time of thirst and  
drought.

But God in mercy smoothed the wanderer's  
way,

And willed that Cain should reach the desert's  
bound.

Thence Cain made better journeys and more  
speed.

And as he way-worn left the waste behind,

A fox stole by, with famine in his face,

The only living thing that he had seen

Save vultures, in his dismal journeying.

And then at last he reached his Father's home,

(But after yet more months of travel hard ;)  
 And he espied the wattle house of boughs,  
 And made his camel kneel before the door,  
 And bowed himself,—and stood at Adam's side.  
 And time and woe had worked their will on  
     Cain.

A milder radiance gleamed from his sunk eyes,  
 His shaggy beard was curbed, and clipped, and  
     combed,  
 And all his wrinkled face, was strangely  
     changed.

His voice was tremulous, his shoulders bent.

“ Oh wherefore hast thou come to vex my soul

“ And wake remembrance of 'thy bloody deed ?

“ (Albeit, Cain,—the deed I've ne'er forgot.)

“Thou art my first born,—Cain,—and yet for  
thee

“I pray no length of days.”—Thus Adam spake,  
“For thou hast done a deed which shall be  
known

“Through all the generations of mankind.  
“Say what cause brought thee hither?—Son, no  
more !”

To whom spake Cain,—“I’m weary of my life,  
“For it is dust and ashes in my mouth,  
“Because the Lord hath set His mark on me ;  
“I am a vagabond upon the earth,  
“A vagabond !—Nay,—more,—a murderer !  
“But yet the Lord is merciful to me,  
“For in my sad and premature old age,



“ My wife bore me a Son, Enoch his name.  
“ I’ve built a city, well called after him.  
“ My Son’s name and the city’s, Enoch both.  
“ But all this happened many years ago.  
“ Enoch, is not,—for God has taken him.  
“ Yet have I joy that Enoch lived on earth !  
“ He ever walked with God his few short days.  
“ And if to me God gave so good a Son,  
“ May I not hope He will remove the curse ? ”  
To whom said Adam,—“ Go in peace at last ;  
“ Mysterious are the ways of God to man.  
“ We cannot fathom all His great design.  
“ Yet will I pray for thee,—nor cease my prayer,  
“ That His forgiveness may yet come to thee.  
“ See that thou prayest too, unceasingly.

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Since God made Adam, in His image formed.  
Nine hundred years, and one score years, and  
ten,

Lived Adam from his birth,—the oldest man  
Except Methuselah,—that ever lived.  
And now extreme old age had robbed his  
strength.

Frail as a withered leaf,—his trembling hands  
Could scarcely brush away the smallest fly.  
Virility had turned to feebleness.  
Eve kneeled by him,—stretched on his bed of  
leaves,

Herself scarce strong enough to bend her knees,  
She watched the waning minutes steal his life.  
Then Adam dreamed a dream at dead of night,

Before his eyes there seemed a multitude.  
Three crosses stood,—raised high upon a hill.  
Though Adam seemed to know within himself  
It was but just three hours past high noon,  
Thick darkness hid the Sun and veiled the light.  
And there were earthquakes,—and they shook  
and rent

The firm round World, down to it's very core.  
And mighty thunderings that bellowed loud.  
And lightnings right across the heavens flashed.  
And graves gave up their long-forgotten dead.  
And on the central cross there hung a man,  
Around his brows,—supernal glory shone,  
A gold effulgence,—bright,—ineffable.  
Then Adam looked upon that sacred face,

And gazing traced the lineaments Divine.  
Then cried he in his sleep,—“The Son of  
God!

“For I myself have seen His Father’s face,  
“When my Creator spake in Paradise.  
“Oh God!—My God!—I’m ready now for death,  
“For well I know that my Redeemer lives.  
“Receive me, Lord,”—then drawing one long  
sigh,

He rendered up his soul in trusting faith.  
Then Eve beheld that Adam now was dead.  
“Oh, Father of all Spirits,—hear my prayer!  
“Let me no longer live,—for he is gone!  
“Thou didst create me,—solace for himself!  
“Part of himself I am,—then let me die.”

Then the Creator listened to Eve's prayer,  
And sent His Angel Azrael to her,  
Who on strong pinions bore their souls aloft,  
Both Adam's and his help-mate's—to the place  
Appointed, where departed Spirits rest.  
Thus from this World passed Adam, and passed  
Eve ;

Who now await in fear and trembling hope,  
Amongst the Spirits in their shadow-land,  
The last great day of judgment and of doom.  
But of that day and hour,—no man may know ;  
Nor e'en the Angels,—only God Himself !

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